



## Aruba officially honors their Queen in the Wilhelmina Park

This weekend was witness to a number of events to celebrate the birthday of Aruba's sovereign monarch the beloved Queen Beatrix. During the reigns of Queen Wilhelmina and then her daughter, Queen Juliana, it was the custom to celebrate Koninginnedag on the Queen's birthday - 31 August and 30 April respectively. On the day of her investiture, 30 April 1980, Queen Beatrix stated that she wished to continue celebrating it on 30 April, as a mark of respect for her mother, Queen Juliana.

During the years that Queen Emma, Queen Wilhelmina's mother, spent the summers at Soestdijk Palace, the local population would present her with a floral tribute on her birthday on 2 August. When Princess Juliana took up residence in her grandmother's country home following her marriage in 1937, the tradition was continued on her birthday, 30 April. After her accession to the throne in 1948, this became the date on which Koninginnedag was celebrated, and the modest parade grew into a national event, which was shown on television from the 1950s onwards. During Queen Juliana's reign, it gradually became the custom for everyone to have a day off on 30 April, which ultimately became an official public holiday. This year, because the day fell on a Sunday, a traditional day of quiet, spiritual observation, the official day for celebration was changed to April 29. Many subjects of the crown will wear orange on this day in respect and support for the royal Family Nassau, House of Orange.

The official ceremony to honor Aruba's Queen was held on Saturday morning in the Wilhelmina Park on L.G. Smith Boulevard in Oranjestad. Every Aruban chapter of the International Scouts paraded down the boulevard to gather in the park for the raising, side by side, of the Dutch and Aruban Flag. Attending the ceremony on behalf of the Queen was her appointed representative in Aruba, His Excellency, and Governor Fredis Refunjol, accompanied by his wife. Attending on behalf of the Aruban Government was Prime Minister Nelson Oduber, and President of Parliament, Mervyn Wyatt-Ras.

After Governor Rufenjol inspected the contingent of the Royal Dutch Marines, Senora Wyatt-Ras, on behalf of the Aruban people addressed the gathering and expressed the regard of the people for their monarch, declaring "Long Live the Queen!"

Governor Rufenjol also addressed the gathering, and touched a moment on some of the mandates brought forth by Holland in regards to its Aruban and Antillean subjects. He also called for a cheer for Aruba's beloved Queen Beatrix, which was enthusiastically delivered by all those attending.

The morning ended with the annual awarding of the "Youth Cup" in the memory of Aruba's first governor, Felipe B. Tromp. A tradition that began in 1992, the trophy is awarded to a young person that has made an outstanding contribution to Aruba, be it in the field of culture, art, sports, or community service. For the second year in a row, Micky van der Vaart, who at the age of sixteen has already won a number of gold medals for swimming, earned the trophy. Micky has qualified to represent Aruba at the Olympic Games that will be held in Beijing, China in 2008. His uncle, Rick v/d Vaart accepted for Micky, as he was competing in Curacao in a major competition over the weekend.

Also receiving recognition for outstanding contributions and effort by Aruban youth was a delegation of Scouting Aruba that represented the island in Antigua at the International Convention. For individual achievement, Andrew Larmonie, only twelve years old, was recognized for his participation in a number of triathlons. In the last year, Andrew has won ten gold medals, five silver, three bronze and thirteen trophies in the name of Aruba. Both Andrew and Scouting Aruba were awarded plaques by Governor Rufunjol.

The official ceremony in the Wilhelmina Park was only the first of several events that took place over Saturday and Sunday in honor of Queen Beatrix. To the delight of the gathering, Governor Rufenjol announced that a visit by the Queen to Aruba is scheduled for mid-November, and preparations will begin to welcome her to the island. A final inspection of the Royal Guard by the governor and a wish for happy holiday ended the official portion of this important day to all Arubans, who consider themselves loyal subjects of their Queen.